

if he wants for his own purposes to refer to them as nuts before the public<sup>1</sup> they shrug that off. It doesn't bother them. The satisfactions of office are achieved from one's internal relationships inside. Relations with the public are sort of dispensable.

CAVETT: Is it possible when he said this is an Asian war for Asian boys and gave the people the impression that he would not widen it and would not bomb, that he would have passed a polygraph lie detector test at the time? I don't know why I'm obsessed with this, but a lot of people seem to be.

on the Press

ELLSBERG: There's an interesting thing about a lot of those statements that can now be checked very easily. I think one thing the press ought to do is to go back and go over their own reporting of a lot of these events and compare it with what they know now and what they would have been reporting then. For instance, one always sees statements by Johnson: <sup>1</sup> I'm not going to go north, and I 'm not going to go south. <sup>2</sup> I'm not going to send American boys to do what Asian boys should be doing. <sup>3</sup>

To my amazement, recently, just in doing academic research on this, I began looking up the exact quotes on some of those, and found that they were almost invariably misquoted recently.

What he used to say, was: <sup>1</sup> I am not going north now; or, <sup>2</sup> I am not, until we need to, going to do this. <sup>3</sup>

<sup>4</sup> I am not going to send boys at this time. <sup>5</sup> Or <sup>6</sup> this is a statement he often made <sup>7</sup> I don't think this is the time for that.

single  
quote here

I think he could well point to those statements now and say that many more cues were given, that his difference with Senator Goldwater might be more a question of timing than of anything else.

CAVETT: Do you mean to give the impression of shifting ~~the~~ the blame a little off Johnson and a little onto the press then?

ELLSBERG: Very much so. I think over the last two years, as I have tried to expound what I thought I knew about President Nixon's policy to people that the Defense Department did not regard as having a <sup>✓</sup>need to know, <sup>✓</sup>in their phrase, I discovered a phenomenon that I think of as a <sup>✓</sup>need not to know, <sup>✓</sup>both on the public's part, <sup>and</sup> on the press's part. They did not hear what they did not want to hear. They still don't do that, and the press cooperates with that. They don't hear what they don't want to hear.

CAVETT: So you and Vice President Agnew both have criticisms of the press.

ELLSBERG: Yes, that's one thing we can agree on. Step

CAVETT: We have a message from our local stations and we will be right back.

(Commercial.)

CAVETT: Dr. Ellsberg, I am dying to know your reaction to one thing that came out in the press some time back, and a lot of people were just stunned when they heard it, and that was Lyndon Johnson said that this whole thing was hatched by Robert Kennedy as a plot to discredit Johnson, and that he asked McNamara to start the study with

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papers. Henry Kissinger, I believe, has been reported as not having known that the report existed until quite recently. Is that true?

ELLSBERG: Well, it's not what he told me in September of 1970 but he may have -- I don't believe that it is true. We did discuss the study in September of 1970 at some length.

I learned from the papers myself that in the month prior to my coming on the project back in '67, that Henry Kissinger had been a consultant on the project. Somebody on the project described to me a dinner that he had with Henry Kissinger, discussing the project in some detail at that time. I didn't know that. He wasn't involved afterwards.

But certainly I did go to him in '70 with the object of encouraging him to read it, and he told me that he did have a copy at that time.

CAVETT: So the answer to my question would be no.

ELLSBERG: The answer to your question would be that the habits of Presidential assistants have not changed much over five administrations in answering embarrassing questions.

CAVETT: So, don't get into time trouble, we have a station break. We'll be right back.

(Commercial and station break.)

(B)  
Regrets

Regrets  
CAVETT: Could I ask you a kind of a broad question then, going back a bit, about when does the public have the biggest gripe coming about being knowingly deceived?

ELLSBERG: That's very hard to answer. We're talking about a record of 25 years of untruth, covering five administrations. The record in the study covers four. My own knowledge of the Nixon administration ~~and~~ personally, and from people inside it, tells me that we are talking about five administrations, pretty steady ~~untruth~~. As far as the policy is concerned, one can ask which years did that untruth involve the public in more or less killing and dying than in other years, and obviously that has been very high in the last few years. I think they have a gripe going back to the Truman administration, though when it comes to Truman's involvement of this country in the support of what the administration clearly recognized internally as American involvement in a French attempt to reestablish its colonial rule over Indo-China.

I have a gripe when I read that. It was late in the game when I came across that, and I think the American citizens are entitled to object to that even though American boys were not yet dying. American napalm was already at work killing Vietnamese.

CAVETT: Have you ever had second thoughts along the line that maybe you should have released this information sooner, that you personally could have saved some lives if your timing had been different?

ELLSBERG: I face that very much. I made decisions that I had hoped would lead to a very early revelation of it, soon after in fact I had read the entire study.

It was a time when I thought it was particularly appropriate

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for it to come out. And two invasions have happened since then. Nine thousand Americans have died since the fall of approximately '69, when I first ~~did~~, I revealed this information to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese have died. So I constantly have to ask myself whether I had done enough. It might seem on the surface that obviously I had not. <sup>H</sup> There were other considerations.

✓ After the President's speech of November 3, 1969, one could say that he had so firmly planted his own stamp on the policy that it was unlikely tht he would change it quickly despite the Pentagon Papers.

Throughout '70, except for Cambodia, there was a general belief that President ~~the~~ Nixon was getting us out, totally out, and again in that environment the studies might have made no difference. These are second ~~nd~~ <sup>order</sup> considerations, but it is the kind of thing that I <sup>had</sup> have to ask myself. I think the effect is <sup>great</sup> ~~is~~ now because <sup>the</sup> ~~it~~ after Laos, after the lying and concealment around ~~Laos~~, Laotian invasion, which is so reminiscent of the earlier operations, people are receptive at last to the thought that there is a continuity of policy between the past administrations and this one, when it comes to getting totally out, and when it comes to ~~stop killing Indo-Chinese~~, that is, our refusal to stop killing Indo-Chinese. And <sup>u</sup> ~~this~~, I think, we are getting a bigger effect now than we might have had earlier.

But when I see myself described as tortured or anguished by any of this, earlier, I think rather ironically if anything that applies to the decisions that I had to make month to month over the last year

and a half <sup>1/2</sup> as to whether I was yet doing enough to end the war.

(B) The Triggering Event

The Triggering  
Event

CAVETT: Can you point to a straw that broke the camel's back?

ELLSBERG: There really were so many, — you know — for me <sup>(1/4)</sup> you're talking about?

( My passage from total involvement in the policy in Washington back in '64 and Vietnam in '65, '66 is a long one, you know, and a great deal has contributed to it. All that experience has led to the decision I have made now, and in a way I feel that none of that experience was wasted. It ~~was~~ all had its impact on what I came to feel I had to do.

~~The experience in Vietnam -- it comes up, I am sure, in a number of questions that will come here, but it is not easy to point to one thing.~~

~~But~~ There was an event, actually, that I remember, very well, as having finally decided me as to what it was that I should do.

CAVETT: Can you tell us what that was?

ELLSBERG: Well, I have always remembered it came after the many other events, as I say, that pointed me in this direction. But --

CAVETT: Would you like to come back to that question?

ELLSBERG: Do we have any time here, or a little?

CAVETT: We have some, yes.

~~sketch that broke etc.~~

ELLSBERG: No, I remember it. In fact, I didn't know the date of this, which was kind of interesting in establishing the chronology here, because I remember <sup>ed</sup> there was a newspaper clipping that I read in Los Angeles <sup>while</sup> once, and I was just back in Los Angeles to see my children.